

LEPTOTYPHLOPS AND RAMPHOTYPHLOPS. FITZINGER, 1843
(REPTILIA, SERPENTES): PROPOSED CONSERVATION UNDER THE
PLENARY POWERS. Z.N.(S.) 2155.

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The present note deals with the names of two genera of burrowing snakes, one in the family TYPHLOPIDAE, the other in the family LEPTOTYPHLOPIDAE.

2. Robb (1966) split the genus *Typhlops* Oppel (1811: 54) on the basis of the structure of the male reproductive organs. Those species with hollow, eversible male organs were left in the genus *Typhlops*, while species with solid, protrusible male organs and blind pouches opening from the wall of the cloaca were placed in a separate genus. Robb selected *Ramphotyphlops* Fitzinger (1843: 24, type-species by original designation *Typhlops multilineatus* Schlegel, 1839: 40), as being the oldest available nominal genus whose type-species qualified for inclusion in the newly defined genus.

3. McDowell (1974: 20) accepted Robb's splitting of *Typhlops* into two genera, but rejected the name *Ramphotyphlops* on the grounds that it is antedated by *Typhlina* Wagler (1830: 196). McDowell believed that the type species of *Typhlina* was *Acontias lineatus* Schlegel (1839: 39) by subsequent designation (Fitzinger 1843: 24).

4. The genus *Typhlina*, when first erected, was based on two species, viz:

Acontias lineatus Reinw.

Typhlops sentemstriatus Schneid.

Acontias lineatus was at the time a nomen nudum. It had previously been published only by Fitzinger (1826: 54), Schlegel (1827: 291), and Boie (1827: 563) and these authors, like Wagler, had given no valid indication as defined in Article 16 of the Code. Thus it was an unavailable name in the sense of Article 68(c) and its designation as type-species of *Typhlina* is invalid. The only other originally included species, "*Typhlops sentemstriatus* Schneid". (a lapsus or an unjustified emendation of *Anguis septemstriatus* Schneider, 1801: 341) had at the time an available name and is therefore the type of *Typhlina* by monotypy.

5. Thus McDowell's claim that *Typhlina* antedates *Ramphotyphlops* cannot be substantiated, as the type-species of *Typhlina* (*septemstriatus*) does not come within the ambit of the genus *Ramphotyphlops*.

6. This raises another problem. *Anguis septemstriatus* has long been considered a member of the genus *Leptotyphlops* Fitzinger (1843: 24, type species by original designation *Typhlops nigricans* Schlegel, 1839: 38). *Typhlina* is therefore a senior subjective synonym of *Leptotyphlops* and would replace that name if the Law of Priority were applied.

7. After its original description *Leptotyphlops* was unused as a valid name for 48 years, being universally treated as a junior synonym of *Stenostoma* Wagler (*in* Spix 1824: 68; non *Stenostoma* Latreille, 1810: 217). When *Stenostoma* was found to be preoccupied (Boulenger, 1890: 243), there followed some 40 years of instability. Stejneger (1891: 501) resurrected *Leptotyphlops* while Boulenger (1892: 10), in the belief that *Leptotyphlops* was a nomen nudum, preferred to use *Glauconia* Gray (1845: 139). For three decades *Glauconia* was more widely used than *Leptotyphlops*, but during the late twenties the use of the latter name became increasingly popular, so that by 1930 very few specialists were still using *Glauconia*. Since 1930 *Glauconia* has appeared in print no more than half a dozen times, while *Leptotyphlops* has been employed in well over 300 publications including the well known faunal lists and textbooks of Ditmars (1939: 171), Smith & Taylor (1945: 20), Parker (1949: 19), Schmidt (1953: 154), Witte (1953: 152), Loveridge (1957: 245), Wright & Wright (1957: 36), FitzSimons (1962: 77), Roze (1966: 39), Peters & Orejas Miranda (1970: 165), Goin & Goin (1971: 301), Mertens (1971: 76), Leviton (1971: 149), Porter (1972: 211) and Pitman (1974: 65). After 50 years of stability it is felt that no useful purpose would be served by replacing *Leptotyphlops* with *Typhlina*, a name unused in its correct sense since its original description.

8. This undesirable nomenclatural change could be prevented by suppressing *Typhlina* and placing it on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology. However, it could be argued, since the synonymy of this name with *Leptotyphlops* is subjective, that to suppress *Typhlina* would create problems should some future worker decide that *Anguis septemstriatus* and *Typhlops nigricans* are not congeneric. Fortunately *Saigonodon* (Peters, 1881: 71, type-species by original designation *Anguis septemstriatus* Schneider), a junior objective synonym of *Typhlina*, is available and could be utilised in such an eventuality. In fact we feel that the use of the name *Saigonodon* is to be preferred since, unlike *Typhlina*, it has been used several times since its original description (Bocourt 1882 *in* Duméril, Bocourt & Mocquard, 1870-1909: 507; Van Denburgh, 1897: 150 & 1912: 153; Stejneger & Barbour (1917: 73 and 1923: 79); Schmidt, 1922: 682; Klauber, 1931: 336; and Tanner, 1935: 267).

9. The Commission is therefore requested

- (1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the generic name *Typhlina* Wagler, 1830 for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy;

- (2) to place the generic names
 - (a) *Leptotyphlops* Fitzinger, 1843 (gender: masculine), type species by original designation, *Typhlops nigricans* Schlegel, 1839, and
 - (b) *Ramphotyphlops* Fitzinger, 1843 (gender: masculine), type species by original designation, *Typhlops multilineatus* Schlegel, 1839,
 on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology;
- (3) to place the specific names
 - (a) *nigricans* Schlegel, 1839, as published in the binomen *Typhlops nigricans* (specific name of type-species of *Leptotyphlops* Fitzinger, 1843), and
 - (b) *multilineatus* Schlegel, 1839, as published in the binomen *Typhlops multilineatus* (specific name of type-species of *Ramphotyphlops* Fitzinger, 1843)
 on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology;
- (4) to place the generic name *Typhlina* Wagler, 1830, as suppressed under the plenary powers in (1) above, on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology.

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